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ABSTRACT

It has been acknowledged that a theory-practice gap exists between the classroom theory presented in a typical undergraduate measurement and evaluation class and the measurement and evaluation practices which currently exist in the schools. This paper addresses the implication of this theory-practice gap on professional preparation programs and provides suggestions and recommendations on how this gap can be reduced. (JD)

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# Implications for Professional Preparation

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Consider the following statement. ".....physical education has gained a place of prominence only in proportion to the development and refinement of its measurement techniques." This statement is in contrast to the information recently presented. The previous presenters have clearly outlined and delineated the problems facing the area of measurement and evaluation in physical education and professional preparation programs, in general. It is obvious that differences exist between the measurement and evaluation concepts typically presented in an undergraduate course and the applications of these concepts in the schools (Morrow, 1978; Hensley, East, Aten, Lambert, Baumgartner, & Stillwell, 1988). Previously, Dr. Wood (Wood, 1990) suggested that the differences between theory and practice could be considered either a gap or a chasm. Whatever term you prefer, the problem is real and must be addressed. I am confident that with teacher preparation programs, teachers, and school administrators working together, an acceptable resolution to a rather complex problem can be achieved.

First, let's look at the differences between the topics or concepts which may be typically covered in an undergraduate measurement and evaluation class and the measurement and evaluation practices which currently exist in the schools. Several studies and articles have noted the fact that a typical measurement and evaluation class outline consists

of such topics as the definition of measurement and evaluation, reasons for testing, components of a good test, validity, reliability, objectivity, statistical techniques, grading, and test construction and administration (Safrit, 1990) while evaluation in the schools focuses on such items as dressing out, participation, attitude, effort, attendance, and sportsmanship (Morrow, 1978; Hensley, East, Aten, Lambert, Baumgartner, & Stillwell, 1989; Johnson & Thomas, 1989b). It is obvious that discrepancies exist between classroom "theory" and the "practice" demonstrated in the schools. The reasons cited for these discrepancies are numerous and are directed at different groups (teachers, administrators, professional preparation programs). Reasons cited include perceptions by teachers that evalauation practices are not necessary (Kneer, 1986), no belief by teachers in evaluation practices (Kneer, 1986), little administrative support for evaluation practices (Johnson & Thomas, 1989b), and such things as large class size, infrequent class meetings, and classes of short duration (Wood & Safrit, 1990). This list is not meant to be all inclusive, and, it must be noted that the reasons cited are somewhat interdependent. Although various groups are implicated, I will limit my remarks to professional preparation programs. Consider reason number one ("Some practitioners felt that recommended evaluative practices were not necessary." and reason number two ("Some practitioners felt that they do not believe in these evaluation

practices.") (Kneer, 1986). Professional preparation programs may not have adequately prepared graduates for employment in the schools. Two possibilities exist for this perceived lack of necessity and lack of belief in evaluation practices: (1) over period of years the practitioners, who, as neophyte teachers, entered the field with intentions of utilizing the "recommended" measurement and evaluation techniques, but over the course of years of employment began to deviate from those "recommended" techniques, or (2) practitioners never felt that recommended evaluation practices were necessary. Preliminary analysis of data (Johnson & Thomas, 1989a) points to the latter. It appears that evaluation in physical education is done using what Dr. Wood (Wood, 1990) termed high inference criteria (eg. attendance, effort, dressing out, sportsmanship) by a high percentage of teachers regardless of the length of employment. The implications for professional programs are quite clear. We must observe what is being done in the field, listen to what is being said by the teacher/practitioner, and review what is being presented in the "typical" undergraduate class. Education and educational programs are dynamic and should continually change to meet the needs of those involved.

In closing, I would offer some suggestions on how teacher preparation programs could provide guidance and leadership in closing this theory-practice gap. A good review of this topic is found in the March

1990 issue of the Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance.

1. Listen to what is being said by the teachers. Ms. Worrell (1990) and Ms. Herring (1990) certainly have provided a good starting point. They cited such things as providing better tests in terms of the time involved in test administration and time involved in scoring and the inclusion of the microcomputer in the measurement and evaluation classroom. These requests are not new, but it is possible that professional preparation programs have yet to adequately address these requests. There may be a need to re-examine our goals and objectives in light of what the teachers are telling us.

2. Support the physical education teachers in the schools. Too often there is little contact between the physical education teachers in the schools and the professional preparation programs of the colleges and universities. Kneer (1986) reported that the theory-practice gap was smallest in schools which supported high levels of in-service education. Additionally, Kirk (1989) suggested that collaborative research projects between practitioners and measurement and evaluation specialists could help strengthen ties between the two groups.

3. Closely examine the philosophies and curricular offerings within

professional preparation programs. What is the measurement and evaluation philosophy utilized in the basic education (activity) program and the methods courses offered at your institution? Is that philosophy consistent with the "theory" presented in the undergraduate measurement and evaluation class. If the "theory" presented in the undergraduate class is not consistent with the measurement and evaluation techniques utilized by faculty members in the methods courses or the activity courses, then conflicting signals are sent to the physical education majors. There may be a theory-practice gap even before the physical education majors graduate. It is no wonder that this gap continues once graduates become employed. We must continue to review and evaluate the topics and methodologies presented in the typical undergraduate measurement and evaluation class. Veal (1988) suggested that preservice teachers be taught "formal accountability systems" in contrast to typical testing/grading models currently presented and Safrit (1990) stated that consideration be given to modifying the typically "heavy" statistics requirement. Additionally, it is recommended that the position of the undergraduate measurement and evaluation course be reviewed. A survey of a number of undergraduate college and university catalogs revealed that the measurement and evaluation course is offered as an upper-division (Junior-Senior) course, many times as a capstone course immediately preceding student teaching. It may be worthwhile to give consideration to

placing the measurement and evaluation course early in a student's academic program so that the theories and techniques presented could be applied and reinforced in subsequent classes (eg. methods). When undergraduate students reach a comfort level with measurement and evaluation concepts they may be more likely to implement these concepts once they become employed as teachers. The earlier and more intense the exposure to measurement and evaluation concepts, the more successful their testing experiences may be.

As I stated at the outset, the theory-practice gap is a complex issue, but with work and diligence, the problem can be resolved.

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